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Redevelopment Board Minutes 01/09/2012

Minutes of Monday, January 9, 2012, 7:00pm
 Arlington Redevelopment Board
 2nd Floor Conference Room, Town Hall Annex
 Approved: 1/23/12

Present: ~Michael Cayer, Bruce Fitzsimmons (Chairman), Andy West, Ted Fields, Christine Scypinski
 Others present: Senior Planner Laura Wiener, Planner Joey Glushko, members of the public

Mr. Fitzsimmons called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.

Ms. Kowalski and Mr. Fitzsimmons reported to the Board that the building permit for the Symmes project had been issued December 14, that the Land Disposition Agreement had been amended and was recorded at the Registry of Deeds, and that Arlington 360 had presented an information session on December 22 to introduce the assisted living developer, The Shelter Group, to the public. The Shelter group would present a model during their hearing. BethAnn Friedman, 10 Hazel Terrace, asked if permanently protected open space on the Medical Office Building site was included. Mr. Fitzsimmons replied that it was.

Bob Radochia asked whether the woods are still a tree farm. Mr. Fitzsimmons replied no, but that it was subject to a conservation restriction that would likely keep it forested.

Mr. Fitzsimmons introduced Senior Planner and Housing Director Laura Wiener who then presented a summary on a survey of Town Meeting Members receptivity to considering a warrant article that would allow accessory apartments. Ms. Wiener noted that comments were varied. She pointed out that the parameters contemplated in the survey were that accessory units would only be considered in R0 and R1 single-family zoning districts. The Board commented on the good number of responses from Town Meeting Members, three-quarters of whom were willing to consider a warrant article on accessory apartments. The Board expressed interest in analyzing the challenges to implementation that Town Meeting Members identified in their comments. The Board also noted that responses from single-family respondents expressed concern about turning single-family zones into 2-family zones. The Board wished to plan a public information session on accessory apartments, since 53% of respondents wanted such a meeting. The Board also advised watching the potential change in character that some respondents were concerned about, noting that a special permit, rather than by-right approach, could help to address this concern.

The Board commented that the first order of business on this agenda was to determine whether to submit a warrant article, since the text of the bylaw change could be determined after the warrant closed. The Board felt that safety should be added to the purpose for the bylaw, and possibly housing for people with disabilities. Ms. Wiener would consult with Town Counsel on accessory structures. The Board members differed on the minimum lot size requirement. Further discussion is needed on whether to (i) allow this use in accessory structures, (ii) define useable floor area, (iii) add fire, safety, and habitable standards, and (iv) limit the number of 12-month owner absences to guard against abuse by absentee owners. The Board asked staff to consult the ZBA's opinion on this possible amendment and Inspectional Services on the enforcement burden, and whether to do it by-right.

The Board also added a requirement that all other provisions of the zoning dimensions and requirements be met. Mr. Fitzsimmons offered to work on clause C7 of the draft text, especially related to parking requirements, and whether to waive if proximate to public transportation or off-site parking arrangements were demonstrated, and owner-occupancy proof.

Mr. Fitzsimmons then asked for public comment. Mr. Radochia asked how these apartments would be different from in-law apartments. Ms. Wiener responded that they are the same, just different names. Upon further questioning about how these units were assessed, the Board stated that the assessor values the property based on what they find, whether it's legal or not.

Patricia Worden commented that some Town Meeting Members didn't respond because they are disenchanted with the concept. She stated that the Affordable Housing Committee discussed it for years. The Zoning Board of Appeals has been approving very large additions. It will turn some 2-families into 3-families, she opined. She commented that it was insidious and detrimental to the Town, and expressed concern that it would open Arlington up to developers.

BethAnn Friedman stated that she didn't see the difference between accessory apartments and 2-families. She also stated that she objected to the owner-occupancy requirement.

Bob Radochia commented that while driving around Arlington he has been looking to try to envision what the town would look like if accessory apartments are allowed. Ms. Kowalski offered that a GIS map showing the zoning districts where accessory apartments are, and are not being contemplated could help. Mr. Radochia stated that there would be no problem if they were inside the existing house but the additions and extra parking could be a concern.

Ms. Worden stated that it was hypocritical and plays into the hands of developers. Mr. Fitzsimmons observed that some property owners with existing accessory units will maintain status quo, but they would need to legalize if they were going for a mortgage. Mr. Cayer countered Ms. Worden saying he believed it was not hypocritical, since one shouldn't avoid making a bylaw because there could potentially be scofflaws. Mr. Fields said accessory apartments currently exist and are unregulated and could be unsafe. Legalizing them will provide a mechanism for making them safe.

The Board and Ms. Kowalski discussed working with Town Counsel to have draft language for all the warrant articles for the next meeting.

The Board then discussed the process for a comprehensive master plan. Ms. Kowalski reported that she thought the Capital Planning Committee understood and could support a capital budget request for a master plan, given the urgency to plan for land use incentives and regulations that could help the Town begin to address the structural deficit and protect the quality of life in Arlington. Ms. Kowalski would develop a more detailed scope of tasks and a draft budget for master planning for the Board's review.

The Board then discussed the materials, stair detail and lighting for 30-50 Mill Street with Adelaide Grady of Wood Partners. Mr. West reported on his site meeting with architect Brian O'Connor and Ms. Grady. The Board members would go to the site to examine the materials and color options after Ms. Grady and Mr. O'Connor return to the ARB showing the elevation drawings showing where the two color palettes are proposed to be used, and will get their comments to Ms. Kowalski. It was agreed that the trim would stay the trim color of the darker of the two palettes, and that there would be four colors total. Ms. Grady will also provide the Board with information on durability and long-term maintenance of the flat panels with metal edges and the window frame edges, and photos of them in place at Rivers Edge.

Ms. Grady would confirm that the seat-wall at the stair detail is not bare concrete. She would also be sure that the seat

extends 2" past the vertical bench rather than ½" and has a bull-nosed edge.

Mr. Fields then moved to approve the minutes of June 2 as amended, seconded by Ms. Scypinski, and all voted in favor.

Mr. Fields then moved to approve the minutes of September 6 as amended, seconded by Ms. Scypinski, and all voted in favor.

The minutes of September 26 were previously approved but further edits were provided.

Mr. Fields then moved to approve the minutes of October 17 as amended, seconded by Ms. Scypinski, and all voted in favor.

Mr. Fields then moved to approve the minutes of November 7 as amended, seconded by Ms. Scypinski, and all voted in favor.

Mr. Fields then moved to adjourn, Mr. Cayer seconded, and all voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 9:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Kowalski
Secretary ex officio

Documents use:
Summary of survey response of Town Meeting Members on willingness to consider a warrant article on accessory apartments
Draft accessory apartment bylaw text
30-50 Mill Street stair and lights details dated January 9, 2012
30-50 Mill Street Detail sheet D-10 prepared by Cube 3 Architects dated January 3, 2012